THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST TRANSCRIPTS

EPISODE 162: THE PIRATE QUEEN

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 162: The Pirate Queen. In this episode, we're going to move the story of English into the 1570s. It was a decade filled with a lot of firsts. The decade gave us a book which many people consider to be the first novel composed in English. The decade gave us the first permanent theater, and the beginning of the modern acting profession. It gave us the first reference to several new technologies. And it gave us the first English captain to sail around the world. And that last development was tied to the first use of a brand-new term in English – the 'British Empire.' It was an empire that carried the English language around the world, but as we'll see in this episode, it all began with pirates. Those pirates raided and plundered the coasts of the Americas with the tacit support of the queen. And the Spanish became so infuriated with her, that they started to refer to her as the 'pirate queen.' So this time, we'll explore those developments, and we'll see how they impacted the English language.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast and get bonus episodes at Patreon.com/historyofenglish.

Now over the past three episodes, we took a deep dive into the sound of English during the Elizabethan period. And to illustrate those pronunciations, we looked at the phonetic writings of John Hart in 1569 and 1570. But now it's time to move on and explore the decade that followed those important works. It's been a while since we focused on the historical developments of this period, so I thought it might be helpful to begin with a quick recap to consider the state of things in England around this point in the second decade of Elizabeth's reign.

Back in Episode in 157, we looked at the growing conflict between Spain and the Netherlands. At the time, the Netherlands were part of the Spanish realm. The king of Spain was Philip II – the surviving husband of Queen Elizabeth's sister Mary. Well, Philip had inherited the Netherlands as part of his share of the Habsburg Empire, but Protestants in that region had started an independence movement which gradually led to war with Spain. And that conflict is relevant to our story because Elizabeth sided with the Protestant rebels, and that was one of the many growing conflicts between Elizabeth and Philip.

Meanwhile, in Scotland, the reigning queen was Mary Queen of Scots. She was Elizabeth's Tudor cousin and a Catholic. And she was Elizabeth's rival because many Catholics in England considered Elizabeth to be illegitimate, and they preferred to have Mary as their queen. But the Scottish Parliament came to be dominated by Protestants, and if 1568, Mary was forced to flee Scotland after a series of scandals specifically involving her potential involvement in the murder of her husband. She fled south England where she was detained and put under house arrest. So now, even though she was in custody, she was living in England, which made her an even greater threat to Elizabeth. And it soon became clear that Philip of Spain wanted Mary to replace Elizabeth on the English throne.

Around this same time, England's first slave-trader named John Hawkins was on an expedition in the Caribbean when his ships were attacked by a Spanish fleet. Many of his crew were killed, but Hawkins and a few of him men were able to make it back to England. Among the survivors was his cousin Francis Drake, who was the captain of his own ship during the expedition. The attack on the English ships caused outrage throughout England adding to the rising tensions between England and Spain. It caused Francis Drake to demand revenge and retribution against Spain, but Elisabeth wasn't willing to risk a war with Spain and its massive empire.

Around the same time that the survivors of the Hawkins expedition returned to England, several Spanish ships got caught in a storm in the English Channel and were forced to take refuge in England. It turned out that they were carrying money intended for Spanish troops fighting in the Netherlands. The currency was worth about 85,000 pounds at the time, so around $30 million today. But Elizabeth confiscated the money, perhaps as a retribution for the Spanish attack on Hawkins' fleet in the Caribbean. [*SOURCE: The Pirate Queen, Susan Ronald, p. 135.*] Back in Spain, Philip was outraged by the decision to seize the money, which continued to add to the tension between England and Spain.

Now those events point to something very interesting about the nature of money, and certainly the nature of money in the Elizabethan period. An economy is really dependent on the exchange of goods and services for money. Money flows through an economy is much that same way that water flows through a river or an ocean. And that basic fact explains the linguistic link between a 'current' of water and 'currency.' They both come from the same Latin root word ***currere***, meaning 'to run or flow or move quickly.' It was the same Latin root that gave us the words ***courier*** and ***course***. All of those words have to do with something that runs or flows or moves quickly. And that link between ***current*** and ***currency*** is even more apparent when we consider how that Spanish silver reached the English Channel on its way to those troops in the Netherlands. The currency reached Europe thanks to ocean currents. Most of that silver came from Spain's colonies in the New World, specifically the western part of South America – in the region of modern-day Bolivia. And it was quite a process to get that silver and gold from South America to Europe.

First, it required intense physical labor to mine those metals. I've noted this before, but we should never forget the devastating human toll of that process, not just in the region of Boliva, but throughout the New World. As the Spanish and Portuguese conquered Central and South America, millions of people died through disease, slavery, torture and warfare. But the lure of gold and silver and other natural resources drove the process forward anyway.

As I noted, most of the silver came from modern-day Bolivia. From there, it was gathered on ships and moved up the western coast of South America until it reached the narrowed isthmus of Panama. Panama is the narrow strip of land in Central America that separates the Atlantic from the Pacific. Of course, today there is a man-made channel though the region which allows ships to pass through. But at the time, there was no channel. So the gold and silver had to be taken off the ships and moved over land by mules to the eastern side of the isthmus. There it was placed in storage. Once a year, a convoy of Spanish ships would converge at that site and pick up the precious metals and other goods, and then transport them across the Atlantic back to Spain.

Again, for protection and safety, and to minimize piracy, the Spanish didn't risk sending one ship at a time. They would send a convoy of ships, which later became known as the ***flota***. By the way, the word ***convoy*** was a brand-new loanword in English in the mid-1500s. It's a French and Latin word that literally means 'to travel or take a voyage together.' But English already had a version of that word since the 1300s thanks to the Normans. The Norman version was ***convey***. So ***convoy*** and ***convey*** are ultimately the same word. And the Spanish used a ***convoy*** to ***convey*** that gold and silver across the Atlantic. Philip of Spain was entirely dependent on those shipments to fund his massive empire, and to fund his wars against the Dutch rebels in the north, and a separate war against the Ottomans in the east. And he was well aware that anything that threatened those gold and silver shipments from South America also threatened his entire empire. [*SOURCE: The Pirate Queen, Susan Ronald, p. 97.*] And the biggest threat to those shipments came from pirates.

Of course, piracy was nothing new. Maritime piracy has existed since the first goods were transported by boats. We even have Old English words for piracy going back to the Anglo-Saxon period. The Anglo-Saxons sometimes referred to a person who plundered a ship at sea as a ***sæ-þoef*** – literally a 'sea-thief.' Another term was a ***sæ-sceaða*** – literally a 'sea-scather.' They also used the term ***wicing***, which was basically the Old English equivalent of the Norse word ***viking***. Both terms originally referred to people who robbed and plundered at sea. But those terms fell out of use after the Norman Conquest.

Though the word ***sæ-þoef*** – or 'sea-thief' – fell out of use, the Elizabethans coined the similar term ***sea robber***. Another word coined by the Elizabethans was ***swashbuckler***. It referred to someone who loved to fight and engage in swordplay, but over time, it acquired a strong connection with pirates in the popular imagination.

Of course, the English often encountered Dutch Sailors in the English Channel, and they borrowed a separate term from Dutch. That was the word ***rover***, which was often rendered as ***sea rover*** during the Elizabethan period. Again, that was very common term at the time.

But the most common term then, as now, was ***pirate***. The word ***pirate*** had been borrowed from French and Latin in the prior century, but it's ultimately a Greek word, which may not be surprising given that the Greeks were great seafarers.

By the way, ***pirate*** isn't the only French loanword for a sea-robber that has deeper roots elsewhere. For example, the word ***buccaneer*** is also a French loanword with a similar meaning, and it also has a much deeper history. Now ***buccaneer*** isn't actually found in English documents until the following century, but it also soon emerged as a common term for a pirate. It is also an interesting blend of languages. The word ***buccaneer*** finds its ultimate origins in the Tupi language, which was an indigenous language spoken in Brazil. The people who spoke that language prepared and preserved meat by smoking it on a wooden framework called a ***buccan***. Well due to European trade and settlement, that word found its way to island of Hispaniola, which was the major Spanish base in the Carribean. And then in the early 1600s, the French began to settle in the western part of that island, which laid the foundation of modern-day Haiti.

Many of those early French settlers in Hispaniola were also pirates, and they adopted that traditional practice of cooking meat on a ***buccan***. And they soon became known as ***buccaneers***. And by the mid-1600s, that term had become a general word for a pirate in French. And then, around that time, English borrowed the word from French. So the word ***buccaneer*** ultimately comes from the name of a cooking device. And interestingly, that same type of cooking device was also used by the native Taino people in the Carribean. Their language was related to the Tupi language of Brazil, and their word for the same type of cooking device was a ***barbakoa***. And I mentioned that word in the earlier episode I did about Columbus. You might remember that that word passed through Spanish and into English as ***barbecue***. So believe it or not, ***buccaneer*** and ***barbecue*** are cognate – one comes from the Tupi language via French, and the other comes from the related Taino language via Spanish. And within the history of those two words you can really get a sense of how words during this period were passing from the indigenous languages of the Americas, through various European languages, and then eventually into English. And another interesting linguistic fact is that both of those words – ***buccaneer*** and ***barbecue*** – are recorded for the first time in English in the same document – a pamphlet by Edmund Hickeringill called 'Jamaica Viewed' published in 1661. But again, even though the word ***buccaneer*** eventually became synonymous with pirates, there is no evidence that it was used in English during the Elizabethan period.

However, Elizabethans did have another French term for a pirate, and this particular word was starting to be used in English around the current point in our story in the mid-to-late 1500s. And that was the word ***corsair***. It was usually used to refer to the pirates who roamed in the Mediterranean, specifically pirates from North Africa and other parts of the Islamic world. They attacked and plundered European ships throughout the Mediterranean. In Europe, they were sometimes called the 'Barbary pirates,' but again, the common French term for them was ***corsair***. And interestingly, the word ***corsair*** is actually related to the words ***currency*** and ***current*** which I mentioned earlier. They all come from the same Latin root word that referred to something that 'ran or flowed quickly.' And we can see than linguistic connection when we consider that those 'corsairs' use the ocean 'currents' to plunder and steal foreign 'currency.'

Now given their geographical proximity, it was common for Spanish ships to encounter corsairs. In fact, it was around this same time in the 1570s that a Spanish sailor named Miguel de Cervantes was captured by a group of corsairs and held for ransom for several years. He eventually secured his release, and later in his life, he wrote book that you've probably heard of. It was called Don Quixote. That particular book was written in the early 1600s, so I'll have more to say about it in a future episode. But its author, Cervantes, was himself a victim of the corsairs around the current point in our story.

I should also note that Cervantes was like a lot of Spanish sailors at the time in that he loved Spanish stories of chivalry, especially those written by a Spanish writer named Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo. And Motalvo's books not only influenced Cervantes's story about Don Quixote, they also gave us a very common place name.

Montalvo wrote about a mythical island that existed beyond the Caribbean which he called ***California***, and many Spanish explorers of the 1500s thought that the island really existed. And when the early Spanish explorers made their way up the western coast of North America in the 1530s, they came across the Baja Peninsula, which they initially thought was an island. They didn't realize that it was attached to the mainland at the northern end. Since they thought it was an island, they called it ***California*** after the name that Montalvo had made up in his Spanish novels about chivalry. And of course, the name stuck and came to refer to much of the western coastline of North America. At the current point in our overall story around the year 1570, no English person had reached that region of North America. But that would soon change.

Now as I noted, Montalvo's books not only gave us the name of ***California***, they were also a direct inspiration for the Cervantes's novel Don Quixote, which was published in the early 1600s – a few decades after the current point in our story. And many scholars consider Don Quixote to be the first modern European novel. It certainly inspired many other writers to compose their own novels, and it helped to popularize that type of literature. But it wasn't the first novel.

Now it's difficult to say what the first novel was because it really depends on how you define the word ***novel*** – and there isn't a universal agreement about that. Most scholars agree that there were earlier works that qualified as novels, but there weren't any in English. That is until now at the current point in our story in 1570.

In the year 1570, a book was published in England called 'Beware the Cat,' and many people consider it to be the first novel composed in English. It's not exactly the type of novel that tends to appear on the bestseller list today, but it does fit the technical parameters of a novel. 'Beware the Cat' is mostly about animals, and it considers whether they have the ability to use reason and logic. It contains stories about cats that speak and use reason – and even contains an extended passage where a group of cats put another cat on trial for violating the cats' rules.

Many scholars consider it to be the first English novel because it satisfies the basic criteria. First, it is a work of fiction. Second, it is a long-extended narrative, not a short story or a collection of short stories. Third, it's written in prose or ordinary speech. Most English fiction prior to the 1500s was composed in verse or poetry, so that's why those earlier works aren't generally considered to be novels. And finally, Beware the Cat is an original work, so it wasn't translated or adapted from an earlier story. Now some people consider Thomas Malloy's Le Morte d'Arthur to be the first English novel. It was composed several decades earlier, and it is the first modern rendering of the legend of King Arthur. But it was adapted from earlier French stories, so it isn't a completely original work. So that's why 'Beware the Cat' is considered by many people to be first novel to be composed in English.

Now this particular book had been written several years earlier by a man named William Baldwin, who was an active Protestant, and the book contained many passages and references that were critical of Catholicism. That's why it wasn't published earlier during the reign of Elizabeth's older sister Mary, who was staunchly Catholic. But now, with Elizabeth on the throne, and with the Protestants back in charge, the book was finally published at this point in 1570.

Now, the conflict between the Protestants and Catholics in England had been simmering since Elizabeth assumed the throne over a decade earlier. She had tried to favor Protestants without offending Catholics. It a moderate approach, but it frustrated those with more extreme views on both sides. It was during her reign that the more extreme Protestants began to embrace a more hard-line approach. And that led directly to the Puritans. They rejected all Catholic imagery and rituals, and they favored local control over churches rather than regional control by bishops. They considered their own very strict Protestant views to be a more 'pure' interpretation of the Bible that those of other Christians. And that term ***Puritan*** started to appear around this time in the 1560s and 1570s.

But it wasn't just the Puritans who were unhappy with Elizabeth's policies concerning religion. Many Catholics were also unhappy with her Protestant leanings, and that included the Pope. In 1570, the same year that Beware the Cat was published, the Pope took the ultimate step and excommunicated Elizabeth from the Catholic Church. The proclamation actually went further than that. It declared that Elizabeth was a heretic and had no right to serve as queen. It was essentially an invitation to assassinate or overthrow Elizabeth and replace her with a Catholic monarch – presumably her cousin Mary, the Queen of Scots.

But interestingly, Elizabeth's excommunication had some unintended effects. It condemned her, but it also liberated her. She no longer had to answer to the Catholic authorities in Rome or anywhere else. And she no longer had to abide by the traditional restrictions of the Church that bound most of the other rulers of Western Europe. For example, the Church prohibited usury, which was the charging of interest on a loan. For centuries, lenders had come up with creative ways to get around the restriction. Well, now, England has no reason to maintain that prohibition. In 1571, England permitted lenders to charge interest at rates up to 10 percent. It was actually a rule that had been adopted during the reign of Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, but it had been repealed after his death. Now it was revived, and it proved to be a commercial boost. [*SOURCE: Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance, Lisa Jardine, p. 371*.]

And then there was the matter of the New World. Spain and Portugal claimed the exclusive right to that region, and they claimed that right based in large part on an agreement sanctioned by the Pope called the Treaty of Tordesillas. I talked about that Agreement back in Episode 146. Well, since the Pope was a party to the Agreement, any European ruler who challenged the arrangement was basically challenging the Church itself. But when Elizabeth was excommunicated, she saw no reason to abide by the terms of that treaty. And the stage was set for England to emerge as Spain's rival in the New World.

The seeds of that rivalry were sown when Spanish ships attacked John Hawkins fleet in 1568. As I noted earlier, Hawkins fleet in the Caribbean on a slave-trading mission, and the Spanish didn't like any foreign ships encroaching on their territory, so they attacked Hawkins' ships. Many of his sailors were lost in the attack and its aftermath, and it was not soon forgotten in England. I noted that one of those was captained by Hawkins' cousin Francis Drake. Drake made it back to England alive, and he spent the rest of his life seeking revenge. In fact, within a few months, he

headed back to the Caribbean to attack and plunder Spanish ships, and to plot even greater raids in the future. [*SOURCE: The Pirate Queen, Susan Ronald, p. 152-3.*] His ultimate goal was to attack that convoy of Spanish ships that brought gold and silver from the storehouses in Panama to Spain. Drake figured out where the gold and silver was being stored, and he made plans to return in the future with a larger expedition to steal it out from the under the Spanish.

Drake was essentially acting as a pirate during this expedition. He was stealing gold and silver from the Spanish, but from his perspective, they had stolen in from the indigenous people of the region. So to use an old proverb, "What is good for the goose is good for the gander." Drake also felt that the Spanish supply lines were overextended and vulnerable. He thought that Spain was leaving its financial lifeline unprotected, and that it was a mistake that could be easily exploited. To use another proverb, "A fool and his money is soon parted," and that came to represent Drake's philosophy when it came to the Spanish.

In fact, that phrase "A fool and his money is soon parted" appeared for the first time in its modern form around this point in the late 1500s. The first known use of the phrase was in a book published by the Bishop of Oxford named John Bridges.

Bridges also coined another common phrase in a sermon that he composed around the current point in our story in 1571. He wrote, "What shoulde we teache in matters of saluation but the Truthe, and all the truthe, and nothyng but the truth?" Well, a short time later, that phrase started to appear in the oaths taken by witnesses in court. And of course, it gave us the modern oath in which a person swears 'to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.'

And speaking of the truth, it turns out that Drake's suspicions about the Spanish ships in the Caribbean was also true. They were a relatively easy target. And by 1572, he had returned to England with the gold and silver that he had taken from Spanish ships, and he was seeking royal support for another larger mission.

Though Elizabeth was starting to face internal plots against her, she continued to have very loyal support among most of the nobility. She had always been close to Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. He was one of her favorites, and there were even rumors early in her reign that the two might marry. But he was already married, and when his wife fell down a flight of stairs and died under suspicious circumstances, the ensuing scandal made it impossible for him to marry Elizabeth. Nevertheless, Dudley remained a court favorite, and at the beginning of 1572, he gave Elizabeth a jeweled bracelet with a small clock in it. That gift was the first reference we have to a timepiece worn around the wrist – what we call a ***wristwatch*** today, though it was called an '***arm watch***' at the time. [*SOURCE: Tudors, Peter Ackroyd, p. 370.*]

Now in that same year, 1572, the English Parliament adopted a law that had several unintended consequences, and proved to be very important to the history of English. That law was known as the Vagabonds Act of 1572. It was a law designed to limit vagrancy and to deal with the large number of vagrants and vagabonds around the country. I talked about that problem back in Episode 156. Well, this new law did something very interesting. It defined the groups of people who could be punished for vagrancy. And among the groups that were included were "common

players in interludes, and minstrels not belonging to any baron of this realm or to any other honorable personage of great degree . . .” [*SOURCE: Elizabethan Society, Derek Wilson, p. 222*.]

Now that provision referred to ‘players in interludes,’ but ***player*** was just the common term at the time for an actor. And as we saw in an earlier episode, an ***interlude*** was a common term for plays that were performed at the time. So this provision specifically applied to actors in plays. And they were included within the definition of vagrants and beggars because the performers often were vagrants and beggars, and the plays they performed tended to attract a lot of undesirable people. The old mystery plays and miracle plays with religious themes had largely disappeared by this point. With the Protestants in power, they had banned most of those plays for being too Catholic. So what remained were informal performances that were often rowdy and bawdy. There were no permanent theaters, so these informal plays were performed in marketplaces, guildhalls, the yards of local inns, or wherever a crowd could be assembled. This new vagrancy law took aim at those performers, but it included that specific exception for actors that belonged to “any baron of this realm or to any other honorable personage of great degree.” So if you wanted to be an actor, you had to find a wealthy patron, otherwise you could find yourself in trouble with the law. And that exception provided the catalyst for the rise of acting companies, and arguably, the rise of the modern acting profession itself.

Now a few moments ago, I mentioned Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. He was one of Elizabeth’s favorites who had given her one of the first wristwatches in recorded history. Well, he was also the patron of a small group of actors, and shortly after this law was passed in 1572, they formed an official acting company known as ‘The Earl of Leicester’s Men.’ That gave them the legal protection they needed, and within a couple of years they had received the first royal patent granted to any company of actors.

Around this same time, Francis Drake was back in the Caribbean wreaking havoc. He had returned in 1572 with plans to attack the settlement on the eastern shore of Panama where the Spanish stored the gold and silver that had been brought from the mines in Bolivia. Remember that the gold and silver was stored there until that convoy of Spanish ships came to pick it up. Well, Drake had figured out the schedule by that point, and during his 1572 expedition, he attacked Spanish ships in the region, and waited until the coast was clear so he could attack the settlement itself. [*SOURCE: British Sea Power, David Howarth, p. 134-5.*] Of course, he literally waited until the ‘coast was clear,’ and in fact, that was the original meaning of the phrase. The ‘coast was clear’ if there were no enemies on the coast that might prevent a landing there. That phrase is recorded for the first time in English around the current point in our overall story in the late 1500s.

Drake discovered that the Spanish didn’t keep a permanent garrison at the settlement. There were only a few settlers there, and they weren’t heavily armed. So in July of 1572, Drake and his men stormed the settlement. The Spanish fired back, killing one of Drake’s men and shooting Drake himself in the leg. Drake’s men soon took control of the settlement, but Drake was bleeding so much from his leg that his men convinced him to retreat. They soon left and returned to their ships where they ‘cooled their feet’ or ‘cooled their heels.’ That’s another phrase that is recorded

for the first time around this point in history. It meant to take a break from a long walk, or in this case, to take a break from an exhausting attack.

Though Drake had been forced to leave the gold and silver back at the settlement, he decided to resort to his usual practice of attacking and plundering Spanish ships. After a few months, Drake had recuperated to the point that he was ready for another shot at the mule train carrying the gold and silver across Panama. In May of 1573, his men attacked the mule train and seized a large amount of gold and silver. In all, Drake and his men seized precious metals and other valuables worth around 200,000 pesos at the time, which is about $23 million today. [*SOURCE: The Pirate Queen, Susan Ronald, p. 152-3.*] They soon decided to head back home to England, and they arrived back in Plymouth in August of 1573. The people who had invested in Drake's expedition made a massive profit thanks to the riches that Drake had seized. And his successful attacks on the Spanish made him a folk hero in England. But in Spain, he was the most hated pirate of the era.

Now earlier, I talked about the use of gold and silver in trade and commerce and the flowing nature of currency and currents. Well those metals were also associated with something else that flows – specifically ink and paint. Gold and silver could also be turned in a fine powder and mixed with water and honey to produce a type of ink that was used to illuminate and decorate manuscripts.

Well, around the time that Francis Drake returned from the Caribbean in 1573, an anonymous manuscript was produced that described how to make that type of ink – and how to illuminate manuscripts. At the time, the term for that type of illumination was called ***limming***. The text was called 'A very proper treatise, wherein is briefly sett forthe the art of limming.' It began by explaining how to trace out the images that were to be illustrated. The passage reads, "First you shall with a pencil of black lead, or with a tool made sharp at the point trace all your letters, and set your vignette or flowers, and then your imagery if you will make any." And that passage is notable because it is the first recorded reference to a lead pencil in an English document.

Lead pencils were a brand new technology at the time. About a decade earlier, an unusual deposit of graphite had been discovered in Cumbria in northern England. Unlike other graphite, this particular deposit was especially solid and workable, and soon thereafter, thin strips were being encased in wood to turn them into writing instruments. The graphite deposit was mistaken as a type of lead, so that's why the text refers to a pencil of 'black lead.' And that mistake is still with us today because we still refer to 'lead' pencils, even though pencils have never contained any actual lead in them. [*SOURCE: The Book of Firsts, Compiled by Ian Harrison, p. 214.*]

Now the word ***pencil*** existed prior to that, but previously, the word actually referred to a type of brush, like a very fine paint brush. The word ***pencil*** is derived from the Latin word ***peniculus***, which meant a 'little tail.' So if you imagine the tail of a horse or a dog or other similar animal, you can see how the tip resembles a brush. By the way, that same Latin root also gave us the word ***penicillin*** because penicillin is derived from a certain type of mold, and when you look at the cells of that mold under a microscope, they are made up of little chains that look like brooms

or brushes. So believe it or not, the words ***pencil*** and ***penicillin*** are cognate. They come from the same Latin root word meaning 'brush.'

So what about the word ***pen*** as in an ink pen? How is it related to ***pencil***? Well, it's not. This is one of those word pairs in English that seem like they should be related, but they aren't. The word ***pen*** comes from a completely separate Latin word – the word ***penna*** meaning 'feather,' because feathers were often used for writing. In fact, the native English word ***feather*** comes from the same Indo-European root as the word ***penna***. But neither word is related to ***pencil***.

Now it was during this same period in the mid-1570s that those first acting companies were looking for patrons. I noted a few moments ago that the first official acting company had as their patron Robert Dudley, the earl of Leicester. And they became known as 'The Earl of Leicester's Men.'

Well, even when actors had a prominent patron, they continued to have a poor reputation due to the crowds that attended their performances. They tended to attract vagrants, and beggars and many elements of the criminal underworld. And the city of London wanted nothing to do with them. So in 1574, the city banned plays from being performed within the city limits. Actors like the Earl of Leicester's Men were then forced to look outside of the city for a place to perform. One of the actors in the acting company named James Burbage tried to find a permanent location just outside of the main part of the city. In 1576, he and his brother-in-law, John Brayne, pooled their money and built a theater in the area of Shoreditch just to the east of town. They called it the Theatre – and it became the first permanent free-standing theater in England. [*SOURCE: Elizabethan Society, Derek Wilson, p. 228*.]

Now that was obviously an important development because it leads us directly to Shakespeare a little more than a decade later. And in fact, that first Theater called 'the Theatre' has a direct connection to the Globe theater associated with Shakespeare. In fact, it actually was the Globe theater. I'll explain this in more detail in a future episode, but by way of a quick preview, the landlord who owned the lot where the theater was built eventually decided that he didn't like having plays performed on his land, and he refused to renew the lease. So while the landlord was out of town, James Burbage's son and several other actors literally dismantled the building and moved it piece-by-piece across the Thames and re-built there. And in its new location, it became known as the Globe. That took place about twenty years later in our story, and in the meantime, several other free-standing theaters had built around London, including the Curtain (1577), the Rose (1587), the Swan (1595). But the main point here is that theaters suddenly started to appear in the outskirts of London in the mid-1570s.

Now speaking of Shakespeare, he is obviously known for his many history plays. Well, one of Shakespeare's primary resources for those plays was a chronicle compiled by Raphael Holinshed called 'The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande.' Shakespeare based entire sections of some of history plays on that particular work. Well, Holinshed's Chronicles were published in 1577 – the year after that first free-standing theater was built just outside of London proper.

By the way, Holinshed's Chronicles were actually part of a larger intended project that was even broader in scope, and he collaborated with a writer named William Harrison who composed a separate book called 'Description of England.' It was a thorough description of the geography, culture and people of England. It was published in this same year, 1577, and it is notable for its vivid descriptions of life in the Elizabethan era. It contains the first recorded use of words like ***aviary*** and ***single-minded***. It also contains the first known use of the word ***cathedral*** in its modern sense as a noun. Previously, it was used as an adjective, so people referred to a 'cathedral church.' But Harrison was the first known person to simply refer to it as 'a' cathedral.

Now interestingly, Harrison dedicated a chapter of the book to the English navy. And though he spoke highly of the navy, there wasn't actually very much to speak about at the time, especially when compared to countries like Spain and Portugal. The English navy paled in comparison. As I noted in an earlier episode, Elizabeth's grandfather Henry VII had ordered an active ship-building program. That was continued into the reign of his son Henry VIII. There were about 80 warships in the English navy during that period. But when Henry's children Edward and Mary succeeded him, that shipbuilding program was largely abandoned, and the number of ships had fallen to only about 26 ships when Elizabeth became queen. Elizabeth had tried to reactivate that program and increase the number of ships in the navy, but England's navy was still tiny in comparison to its rivals on the Continent. [*SOURCE: The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in Renaissance England, Kathy Lynn Emerson, p. 151-2.*] For example, Spain had nearly ten times more ships in its navy than England did. [*SOURCE: In Search of a Kingdom, Laurence Bergreen, p. 38-9.*]

But despite it's small size, Elizabeth's navy did have one advantage. The new ships built during her reign had been re-designed to make them faster and more maneuverable. If you imagine ships of this era, you might think of the ships that are really tall in the front and back and low in the middle. They were designed that way in part because a naval battle was often fought with crossbows and arrows. And the towers on the front and back provided a good shooting position when the two ships came into close contact. The two ships would often pull alongside each other, and the sailors would attack each other at close proximity. In fact, that's how we got the word ***accost***. If you look very closely, you may see that the word ***accost*** contains the word ***coast***. ***Coast*** originally referred to the side or edge of something. Well, the edge of the sea where the sea meets the land is the 'coast' line. And when one boat pulled alongside another boat to attack it, it was said to 'accost' it. And from there, the word ***accost*** came to mean 'a hostile or unwanted or violent approach.' And I should note that the word ***accost*** is recorded for the first time in English around the current point in our overall story of English in the late 1560s.

Well, during the Elizabethan era, that type of naval combat was in decline because most ships now carried cannons. And cannons could be fired at a distance, so the two ships didn't need to come into close contact with each other as much. And for that reason, English ship builders decided to reduce those towers on the front and back of those ships because they weren't really needed anymore. That made the ships lighter, faster and more maneuverable. Those types of ships were sometimes called 'race-built galleons.' [*SOURCE: The Time Traveler's Guide to Elizabethan England, Ian Mortimer, p. 179*.] In his description of England, William Harrison seems to allude to that change in his chapter on the English navy. He wrote, ". . . the common

report that strangers make of our ships amongst themselves is daily confirmed to be true, which is, that for strength, assurance, nimbleness, and swiftness of sailing, there are no vessels in the world to be compared with ours."

Well, Harrison's book was published in the same year as another important book called 'General & Rare Memorials Pertaining to the Perfect Art of Navigation.' Now this other book is very important to our story because it argued for a further expansion of the English navy so that it could compete with the navies of Spain and Portugal in the New World. The book was written by John Dee, who was a mathematician and astronomer and astrologer. He was one of Elizabeth's close advisors. And in this particular book, he made the argument for what would become the British Empire. And as we'll see, he also coined the term 'British Empire.'

As I noted, England only had a handful of ships in its navy. In a time of war, the government had to commandeer merchant ships and merchant sailors to augment the royal ships. But Dee argued for a larger, standing navy to protect the country from invasion. He proposed what he called a 'Petty Royal Navy' with 60 tall ships and 20 smaller vessels. He said the ships should patrol the coasts, not only to prevent an invasion from another country, but also to prevent piracy by foreign ships and to prevent foreign fisherman from fishing the English waters. [*SOURCE: The Pirate Queen, Susan Ronald, p. 200-1.*]

In his book, he referred to Britain, Ireland and the surrounding islands as the 'British Isles,' and he is the first known writer to use that term. It reflected the notion that all of those regions fell under the authority – or should fall under the authority – of the English monarch. He also repeatedly used the term 'British Empire' to include to any other regions which might be added to the queen's realm. Dee is generally considered to be the first writer to use the term 'British Empire' in reference to Britain and its foreign possessions. I should note that the Oxford English Dictionary does cite another book that used the same term about four years earlier, but that usage was a historical reference to the legendary empire of King Arthur. Dee was apparently the first to use the term in reference to modern Britain.

By the way, as an aside, the spellings in Dee's book are similar to the spellings we have today, but there are many cases where the spellings are different. For example, in his use of the term 'British Empire,' ***British*** is spelled 'B-r-y-t-i-s-h,' and ***Empire*** is 'I-m-p-i-r-e.' The word ***foreign*** is spelled 'f-o-r-r-e-i-n.' So it wasn't spelled with a G like today. The G in ***foreign*** didn't appear until the following century, and it isn't entirely clear why it was added because there was never a G in the word prior to that. The best guess is that the G was added to ***foreign*** to bring it in line with the spelling of other words with a G like ***sovereign*** and ***reign*** ('r-e-i-g-n').

Dee's book also spells the word ***pirate*** as 'p-y-r-a-t.' So if anything, the spellings were a bit more phonetic than the standard spellings we use today. And Dee used the word ***pirate*** in his book because he thought that pirates were a key to his whole plan. He realized that England did not have enough experienced sailors to man all of the new ships he was proposing, so he suggested that pirates could be called into service. He included the following passage: "Yt is not to be forgotten or neglected, that for a while, at the first (and perchance, now and then, afterward) this Nauy, is likely to mete with, and to Sease vpon, Diuers Pyrats and Rouers: who, either at broader

Seas (you may ges, where) or els, nerer hand, haue made Rauening hauock: And now, they, and their Goods, Threasor, Ships, and all, will fall into the hands, of Our Pety-Nauy-Royall, or some parte therof."

One of the most fascinating parts of that passage is where he refers to pirates in "broader Seas." He follows it with a comment in parentheses. He says "you may ges, where." That seems like a pretty obvious reference to the Caribbean, where English ships like those of Francis Drake were already challenging the Spanish. But his wording was typical of the period. It was nod and a wink to what Drake was doing, without actually endorsing it.

Shortly after the book was published, John Dee met with Elizabeth to discuss his ideas. And it appears that she agreed with his proposals. A new shipbuilding plan was soon put in place. And John Hawkins, the original slave-trader who ships had been attacked by the Spanish a few years earlier, was put in charge of the effort. He was made treasurer of the Navy. He also ensured that the new ships had the flatter and lighter design that made them faster and more maneuverable. [*SOURCE: Elizabethan Society, Derek Wilson, p. 147.*]

Now these were actually very important developments. Prior to this point, England didn't tend to challenge Spain or Portugal on the open seas, at least not officially. People like John Hawkins or Francis Drake might do it, but they were acting on their own. England itself tried to avoid any open conflicts with Spain and Portugal at sea. But all of that changed when Elizabeth embraced Dee's proposals. She decided that is was time for England to also become a colonial power. The plan was for English sailors to challenge Spanish and Portuguese supremacy on the high seas as far as the ocean currents would take them. And of course, the English language went with them.

But it would take time to build up England's navy, and for now, it wasn't possible to challenge Spain directly. So Elizabeth took a middle course. She decided to embrace pirates like Francis Drake, and let them do the dirty work for her. And specifically, she was willing to let Drake attack Spanish ships and raid Spanish ports in the New World with her tacit, but not explicit, approval. She gave him her private consent, and according to Drake, she even gave him money. But she didn't give him an official letter authorizing him to act on her behalf. [*SOURCE: British Sea Power, David Howarth, p. 146.*] So he was technically a pirate, and not a privateer. So what was the difference between a pirate and a privateer? Well, it was really a legal distinction.

Pirates raided ships on their own behalf, and sometimes on behalf of private investors. Their actions were clearly illegal, and if caught, they could be killed on the spot. Privateers also raided ships, and at first glance, their actions were pretty much the same as pirates. But privateers had the official backing of a specific monarch or country. They carried a formal letter with them from the king or queen which authorized them to carry out raids. It was essentially a way to bring private ships into service in a time of war and to allow the private ships to conduct raids on behalf of the government. And if a privateer was caught, he was entitled to be treated a prisoner of war. Of course, if you were the one being attacked, there wasn't much difference between a pirate and a privateer. But in the case of Francis Drake, he was somewhere between the two. Elizabeth gave him her private consent, but she didn't issue the formal letter that would have made him a privateer. England was not at war with Spain at the time, so Drake couldn't really be

a privateer, and Elizabeth wanted to avoid a war if she could. So the plan was to allow Drake to attack the Spanish gold and silver supply lines while pretending that he was acting on his own. Today, we call it 'plausible deniability.' Elizabeth was essentially embracing piracy as government policy, and it led the Spanish authorities to dub her 'the pirate queen.'

Now I said that Drake operated in the gray area between a pirate and privateer, but the word ***privateer*** wouldn't have been used at the time. It isn't found in an English document until the middle of the following century. It's a term that was apparently coined within English. Privateers were captains of private vessels that were allowed to raid foreign ships. So it appears that the '-eer' suffix was added to that word ***private*** to create the term ***privateer***. That '-eer' suffix was acquired from French in the 1500s, and it became quite popular in English. During that period, English borrowed words like ***pioneer*** and ***cannoneer*** – someone who mans a cannon. By the early 1600s, English had also borrowed the word ***volunteer***. And as I noted earlier in the episode, English soon borrowed the word ***buccaneer***. So some modern scholars think that ***privateer*** was formed within English on that same model, especially the model of a word like ***buccaneer***, which had a similar meaning.

But again, the word ***privateer*** wasn't coined until the following century. So what would such a person be called during the Elizabethan period? Well, the most common term was probably a ***freebooter***. That term was actually an anglicized version of a Dutch word ***vrijbuiter***, which combined the Dutch words for 'free' and 'booty' as in the material plundered from an enemy ship. Well, English sailors apparently thought that the Dutch word ***vrijbuiter*** sounded like 'freebooter,' so that's how they started pronouncing it, and it produced the word ***freebooter***.

But English also had another version of that word in the Elizabethan period, and it had a similar meaning then, though it has very different meaning today. That other word was ***filibuster***. It's a term that is probably familiar to you if you follow US politics, but it began as a term for a freebooter or privateer, and as I noted, it is actually a variation of the word ***freebooter***.

It appears that French picked up the word either directly from the Dutch word ***vrijbuiter*** or perhaps from the English version ***freebooter***. Either way, French had the word as ***fribustier***. And from there, the 'r' sound became an 'l' sound, thereby producing the word ***flibustier***. A couple of episodes back, we saw how the 'r' and 'l' sounds are closely related and can sometimes switch from one to the other. And that's apparently what happened here. And from there, Spanish took the French word ***flibustier***, and converted into ***filibustero***. And then English borrowed that Spanish form of the word. So ***filibuster*** is basically what you take ***freebooter*** and run it through French and Spanish and then take it back into English. And again, ***filibuster*** originally had much the same meaning as ***freebooter***. It meant a 'privateer,' and sometimes a 'pirate' because the distinction between the two wasn't always clear.

But of course, in modern American politics, the word ***filibuster*** refers to a procedural rule in the US Senate which can be used to block legislation. It does that by requiring 60 votes to pass a bill, rather than a simple majority. Well, that modern legislative meaning came about because, after the rule was adopted in the 1800s, the first senators to use it were called 'filibusters' by their political opponents. Their opponents accused them of interrupting the normal legislative process

in the same way that pirates interrupted the voyages of ships on the high seas, and wreaked havoc in the process. At the time, the word ***filibuster*** was still a common term for a privateer or pirate. So the word was extended to those who used that new Senate rule, and from there it came to apply to the rule itself. And today, that sense of the word has largely replaced the original sense of the word.

Now whether Francis Drake was referred to as a freebooter, or a filibuster, or an outright pirate, he was a folk hero to many people in England. And in 1577, he and a small fleet of ships set sail from Plymouth and headed back to the Caribbean to attack and plunder Spanish ships. But this time, Drake had something else up his sleeve. His plan was to follow Magellan's earlier route around the southern part of South America and to carry out direct attacks on those Spanish cargo ships that sailed up the west coast of South America to Panama. Rather than raiding the storage rooms at the end of that trail, he was going to attack the ships before they could offload their gold and silver. He apparently had written instructions approved by the queen, but again, he had no formal commission that would have made him a privateer. So he was walking that fine line between pirate and privateer. [*SOURCE: The Pirate Queen, Susan Ronald, p. 219*.]

I should mention that one of Drake's crewman maintained a diary during the voyage, which was later published. And that's why the details of this voyage are known today.

It appears that Drake didn't initially inform anyone of his plan to sail around South America into the Pacific. He didn't even inform his crew. They were apparently led to believe that Drake was going to head back to the Caribbean and conduct the same kind of raids that he had conducted before. It was a story that they were eager to believe, and to use a proverb that was common at the time, they 'swallowed a gudgeon.' A ***gudgeon*** was a type of small fish like a minnow, and it was said that a gullible person was someone who would 'swallow a gudgeon.' It's first appearance in an English document coincided with this particular voyage. And of course, it is a precursor of the more modern version of the proverb, which is 'to swallow something hook, line and sinker.' Of course, that modern version refers to a fish swallowing the bait, whereas the Elizabethan version referred a person swallowing a fish. But it's the same basic idea.

Drake's personal ship was of the new style – lighter and faster that the Spanish cargo ships. It was also relatively small – only about 100 feet long. It's safe to say that his crew occupied tight quarters. They probably lived 'cheek by jowl' to use another phrase that first appeared around this same time. 'Cheek by jowl' is derived from the older phrase 'cheek by cheek' meaning 'side-by-side.' Of course, a person's cheek is by their jowl, so 'cheek by jowl' was just a different way of saying 'cheek by cheek.' And within a couple of decades, even Shakespeare was using the phrase in his plays.

As I noted Drake's plan was to follow the same route than Ferdinand Magellan had taken about a half century earlier. Magellan didn't actually pass around the tip of South America. Instead, he took a short cut through the straits in the southern part of the continent that still bear his name to this day. Well, Drake attempted the same passage, but it took several months and the weather battered his ships. Of the three ship he took into the straits, one was lost, along with all of the

crewman on board. Another eventually turned around and went back to England. But Drake plowed ahead and eventually made his way through to the other side.

Along the way, Drake faced a near mutiny from his crew. [*SOURCE: In Search of a Kingdom, Laurence Bergreen, p. 119.*] Mutinies were nothing new, but the word ***mutiny*** was. It's another French loanword recorded for the first time in English around this same time. By the way, I noted a few moments ago that English speakers of this period were enamored with the '-eer' suffix. Well, within a couple of decades, we find the first uses of the word ***mutineer*** for someone who commits a mutiny. But in the end, Drake's crew were not mutineers. They remained loyal to their captain.

After the crew finally emerged from the straits, they headed up the western coast of South America, attacking and plundering Spanish ships along the way. Time and again, they were able to out-maneuver the Spanish ships, and the crews of those cargo ships offered little if any resistance. That was partly due to the element of surprise. Spanish ships didn't think that English pirates could reach the Pacific. There had not been any English ships in the region before. So the Spanish captains usually thought that Drake's ship was a friendly ship as it approached, and by the time they realized what was going on, it was too late and they usually surrendered. [*SOURCE: British Sea Power, David Howarth, p. 148*.]

At one point, Drake approached an island off the western coast of modern-day Chile called Mocha. And I mention that island because it has an interesting literary connection. Many years later, in the early 1800s, a large 70-foot whale was repeatedly spotted near the island. It proved to be incredibly hard to catch, and it was given the nickname 'Mocha Dick.' Well, Herman Melville heard stories about that whale, and in the mid-1800s, it inspired him to write a novel about the pursuit of a large whale, only he changed the name from Mocha Dick to Moby Dick. So that great American novel can ultimately be traced back to this same island called Mocha.

Well, when Drake's ships arrived there in the 1578, he and his crew decided to dock there for supplies. They were approached by a group of indigenous people who seemed friendly and led Drake's ship into a narrow creek. But it was really an ambush. The inhabitants of the island starting firing at the ship with bows and arrows. Several of Drake's men were hit by arrows, and Drake himself was struck in the face. But the crewmen were able to cut the ship's ropes, and they managed to make a quick escape. [*SOURCE: In Search of a Kingdom, Laurence Bergreen, p. 167-70.*] And I mention that story because the process of cutting a ship's ropes to make a quick getaway is where we get the term 'cut and run,' which we still use today.

By the time Drake reached the western shores of Panama, his ship was loaded with gold and silver and other plundered treasures. His crew probably had a hard time finding room for all of the stolen goods. At the time, the process of arranging and rearranging the cargo on a ship to make room was called ***rummaging***. It was a nautical term that still survives today when we rummage around for something in a closet or other confined space. But in order to make room for something valuable like gold and silver, it sometimes meant that the crew had to get rid of something else that was less valuable. And that gave us the other sense of the word ***rummage*** –

as junk or rubbish. It's the type of stuff that you might get rid of today by having a 'rummage' sale.

Now from Panama, Drake and him men continued to sail north. They realized that they couldn't turn around and go back home through the straits because the Spanish warships would be waiting for them there. So they proceeded northward looking for the ever-elusive northwest passage. That was the idea that there was a waterway across North America that connected the Atlantic and the Pacific. Of course, there is no such passage, but sailors in the 1500s still held out hope that it existed. As Drake's ship sailed northward, it passed along the shore of California becoming the first English ship to encounter that region. I noted earlier in the episode that the Spanish had named that region ***California*** after a fictional island in those popular Spanish novels about chivalry.

Eventually, Drake passed beyond California and continued to press northward until he reached the vicinity of modern-day Vancouver in Canada. At that point, the winds were so strong and the weather was so cold that he decided to turn around. He soon made his way back down to the region around modern-day San Francisco. And from there, he realized that his only option was to follow Magellan's path and sail westward to reach home by going around Asia and Africa. It took several months, and when he finally reached England in 1580, his crew became the second crew to sail around the world, and the first English crew to do so. And given that Magellan was killed in the Philippines during his voyage, Drake became the first captain to sail completely around the world.

He had done it in far less time that Magellan, and he had survived unlike Magellan. And most of his crew made it back with him in good shape, which was in stark contrast to what happened on Magellan's voyage when only a handful of the crew members made it back home – and they were barely alive when they returned. Furthermore, Drake's ship was absolutely loaded with Spanish gold and silver. The exact amount quickly became a carefully guarded state secret in England, but it was certainly worth tens of millions of dollars in today's money. Drake received a sizeable share, which made him a very wealthy man. His crew also received a large share, and according to some estimates, the people who invested in the voyage received a 75 pound return for each pound they had invested. The rest of the gold and silver – being the bulk of it – was taken to the Tower of London. Elizabeth kept it and added it to the royal coffers. Some scholars have estimated that the amount kept by Elizabeth was more than enough to pay all the expenditures of her realm for a full year. She went from a monarch teetering on the edge of bankruptcy to a queen swimming in gold and silver. And while Francis Drake became a folk hero in England, we shouldn't confuse him with Robin Hood. He may have stolen from the rich, but he wasn't giving it to the poor. And he certainly wasn't giving anything back to the people of South America where the gold and silver came from. It was a story that would be repeated again and again over the following centuries.

There is no doubt that Elizabeth was thrilled with the results of Drake's voyage. And a few weeks later, she even attended the ceremony where he was knighted on board the ship that had taken him around the world. Drake would continue to be one of her favorites – even as these events led England and Spain closer and closer to war.

It would be tempting to dismiss Drake's expedition as just another voyage of discovery, but it was much more than that. In England, it was considered the greatest voyage of the Elizabethan era, celebrated by both queen and commoners. It announced the arrival of England as a major maritime power capable of competing with the global power of Spain anywhere in the world. England was no longer a second-rate kingdom confined to the North Atlantic.

While the voyage heralded the rise of the British Empire, in many ways, it also marked the decline of the Spanish Empire. Drake had shown that the Spanish navy was overextended and not able to defend its massive colonial holdings. It was also heavily dependent on gold and silver supply lines that could be easily disrupted. For the first time, Elizabeth had shown that the Spanish were vulnerable, and that England was prepared to take advantage of that vulnerability. The next step was to challenge Spanish supremacy in North America, and within five years, England would plant it first colony just up the coast from the existing Spanish settlements in Florida.

Of course, all of this added fuel to the fire that raged between Elizabeth and her former brother-in-law, Philip of Spain. And it caused him to redouble his efforts to depose Elizabeth and replace her with her cousin Mary Queen of Scots.

Next time, we'll move the story forward into the following decade – the 1580s. And that was another very important decade. It gave us the first English colony in the New World and the invasion of England by the Spanish Armada. It gave us Shakespeare's arrival in London, and his oldest surviving poems. It also gave us the works of other great writers like John Lily and Edmund Spencer. And it gave us a very important text on the English language which largely formalized the modern approach to English spelling. So there's a lot to cover, and we'll start to break it all down in the next episode.

Until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.